

# **Pancreatic cancer**

## **Surgery to remove pancreatic cancer**



## **An EasyRead Booklet**

## Contents:

This EasyRead booklet is about pancreatic cancer if you can have surgery to remove the cancer.

There are 4 booklets in total.

- **Pancreatic cancer** - What is it? How is it diagnosed?
- **Pancreatic cancer** - Treatment if you can't have surgery
- **Pancreatic cancer** - Surgery to remove pancreatic cancer
- **Pancreatic cancer** - Treating symptoms and getting support

You can get the booklets at: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/easyread](http://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/easyread)

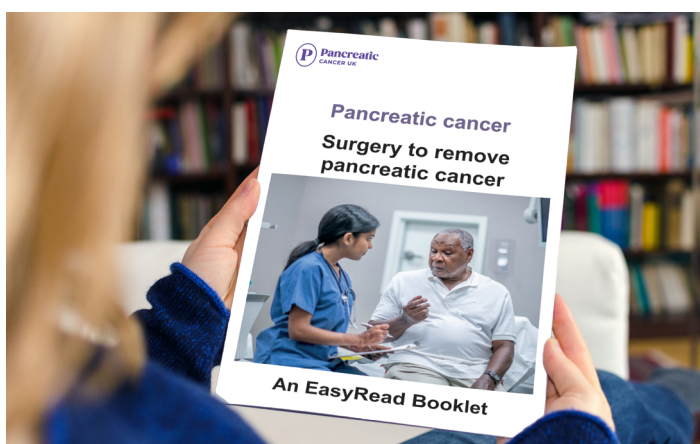
Section	Page
About this booklet	3
Who will I be treated by?	4
Other people that you might see	5
Talking to your doctor and nurse	6
Treatments	7
Treating jaundice	8
Surgery to remove the cancer	9
Bypass surgery	10
Side effects after surgery	11
After your operation	12
Check-up after your operation	13
Chemotherapy after surgery	14
Support from us	15

## About this booklet



This EasyRead booklet can help if you have pancreatic cancer and have been told you can have surgery.

It might also be helpful for your family and friends.



There is a lot to take in when you have just been diagnosed.

This booklet will give you the information you need.



If you have any questions about anything you read in this booklet speak to your doctor or nurse.

You can also speak to one of our specialist nurses on our Support Line.



They can answer your questions and talk about your worries.

The number is **0808 801 0707**.

It is free to call.

You can also email the nurses at: [nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)



## Who will I be treated by?



The team responsible for your treatment and care is called the multidisciplinary team or **MDT**.

It is based in the hospital and is made up of doctors and nurses.



You might not meet everyone in the team but they will all look at your test results and decide the best treatment for you.

The team will be involved in decisions about your treatment. You will be involved too.



You will be given a main person to contact, who is usually a specialist nurse.

They will give you expert care and advice.



They will support you and be the person you talk to most. They will be part of your MDT.



## Other people that you might see



**Surgeon** – a doctor who does operations.



**Oncologist** – a doctor who treats cancer.



**Dietitian** – a professional who gives advice about diet and which foods are best to eat.

They also help with any problems you have when you eat.

## Talking to your doctor and nurse



Your doctor or nurse should ask you about how you are feeling and if you feel sad or worried.

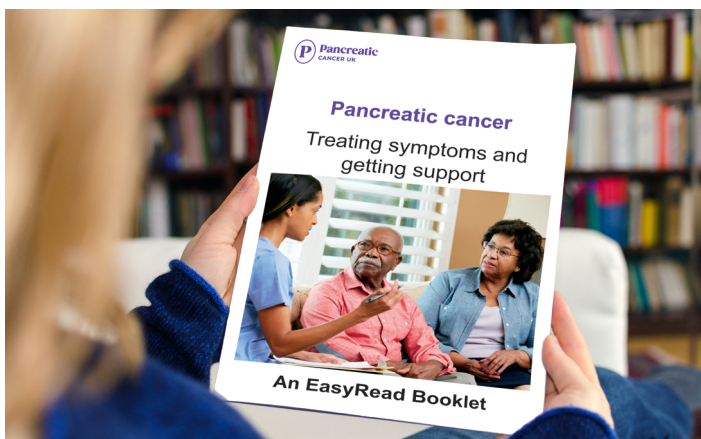


They should also ask about symptoms or side effects that you may have, like pain or tiredness.

If your doctor or nurse doesn't ask about these things, it's important to tell them about anything that's worrying you.



They should make sure you have all the care and support you need.



For more information on symptoms and side effects look at our booklet: **Pancreatic cancer - Treating symptoms and getting support.**



## Treatments



You will have an appointment with the doctor to talk about what treatments you can have.

They will tell you what these will involve and about any side effects.

**There is more information about treatments on the next pages.**



It's a good idea to take someone with you, like a family member or friend.

They can help you to remember what is said and take notes for you.



You don't have to make a decision about treatment right away.

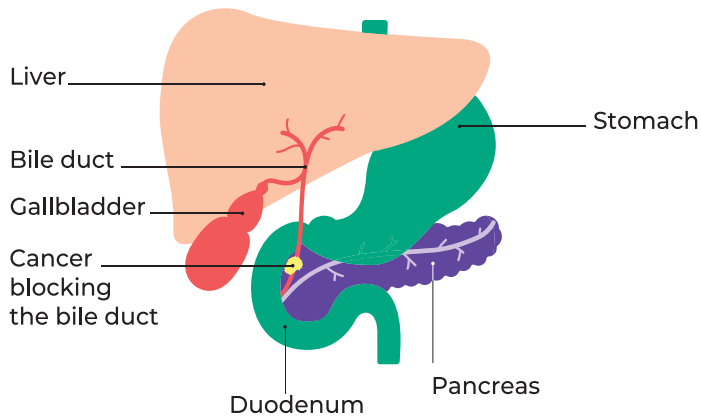
You will be given time to think about what the doctor has said.



You might want to talk to other people about it, like your family or your GP.

Don't be afraid to ask the doctor or nurse any questions you have about your treatment.

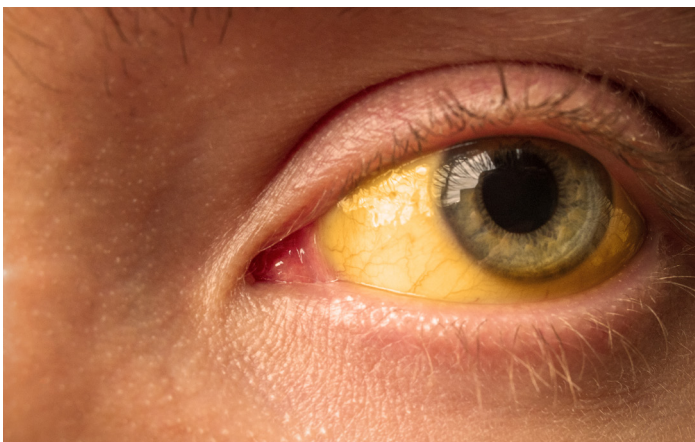
# Treating jaundice



If the cancer blocks the bile duct, it can cause **jaundice**.

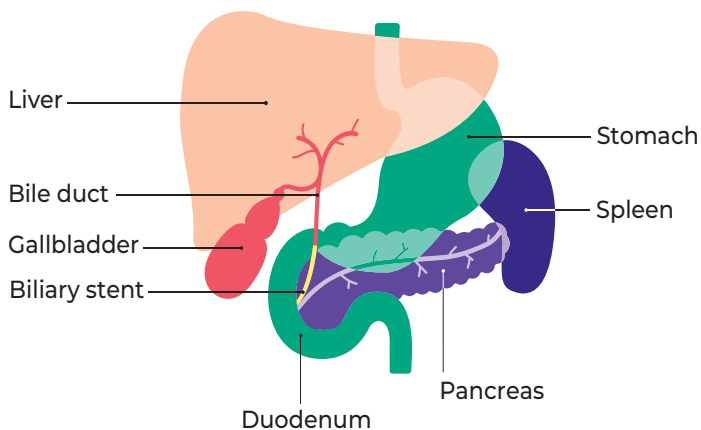
The **bile duct** is a tube that carries bile from the liver.

**Bile** is a fluid that helps to break down food.



Symptoms of jaundice are yellow skin and eyes and itching.

You may also have dark pee and pale poo.



If you have jaundice and you are not well enough for surgery yet, you may need to have a stent put in.

A **stent** is a small tube which is put into the bile duct to open up the blockage.



If you are well enough to have surgery to remove the cancer right away, you may not need to have a stent put in.

The surgery will treat the jaundice.



## Surgery to remove the cancer



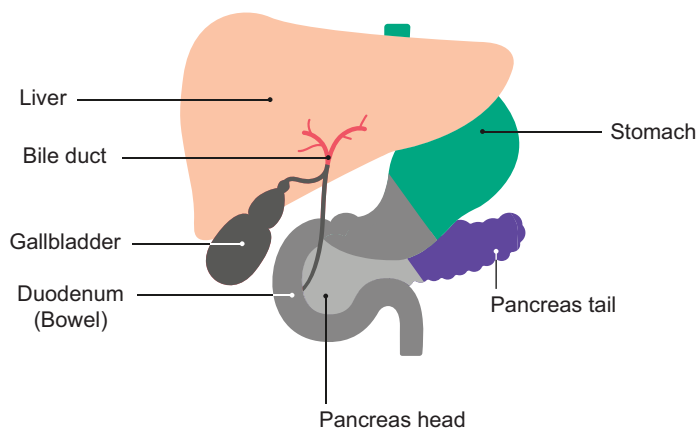
You may be able to have surgery if the cancer has not spread outside the pancreas. You will need to be well enough to have the operation.

Surgery to remove the cancer is the best treatment for pancreatic cancer.



There are different types of surgery. The most common is the **Whipple's operation**.

The surgeon will remove part of your pancreas and sometimes part of the organs around your pancreas as well.



Surgery may remove:

- part of the stomach
- part of the bowel
- part of the bile duct
- the gallbladder.



The operation can take 4 to 10 hours.

The surgeon will try to remove all of the cancer to give you the best chance of recovery.

## Bypass surgery



Sometimes when the surgeon starts the operation they find that it is not possible to remove the cancer.



Instead the surgeon may decide to do a different operation, called **bypass surgery**.

Bypass surgery won't cure your cancer but it will help with symptoms.



The doctor will speak to you about your treatment.



## Side effects after surgery



After surgery you may have pain.

Your doctor can give you painkillers to help with this.



You might have problems with eating and breaking down (**digesting**) your food.

Your doctor can give you capsules called pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (**PERT**) to help with this. Brands include Creon, Nutrizym and Pancrex.



Some people can get **diabetes**. This is where your blood sugar levels are too high.

You may need medicine to control this.



You may feel very tired after surgery.

There is more information about side effects in our booklet:

**Pancreatic cancer** - Treating symptoms and getting support.



## After your operation



Recovering from surgery takes time and you will probably feel very weak after your operation.

It may take a few months to a year to fully recover.

This will be different for each person.



You may spend one to two weeks in hospital, or longer. This depends how well you recover and if you can eat and drink normally.

You will be told who to contact if you have any problems.

This is usually a nurse.



When you first go home, you will get tired easily. You will need to take it slow.

You may need help with things like shopping and cleaning.

Make sure you move around, and do a little bit more every day. This can help you feel better.



## Check-up after your operation



A doctor will do some tests on the tissue that was removed during your surgery.

You will have an appointment with your surgeon, to get the results of these tests.

You can also talk about any side effects or other problems you are having.



You will keep having check-ups (**follow-up**) after your operation. You may have blood tests and a scan for these.

- For the first two years, you may have a check-up every six months.



- After two years, you may have a check-up every 12 months. These may be phone calls, rather than in person.
- After five years, you probably won't have check-ups. You can speak to your GP if you feel unwell or have any symptoms.

## Chemotherapy after surgery



**Chemotherapy** is when you are given medicine to kill the cancer.

It is given through a tube which is put into your hand, arm or chest.



You may be offered chemotherapy after surgery to try to stop the cancer coming back.

You will start chemotherapy when you have recovered from the surgery. This may be up to 12 weeks after your operation.



Chemotherapy can cause side effects. They include feeling and being sick, and feeling very tired.

You are also more likely to get an infection that can make you ill.



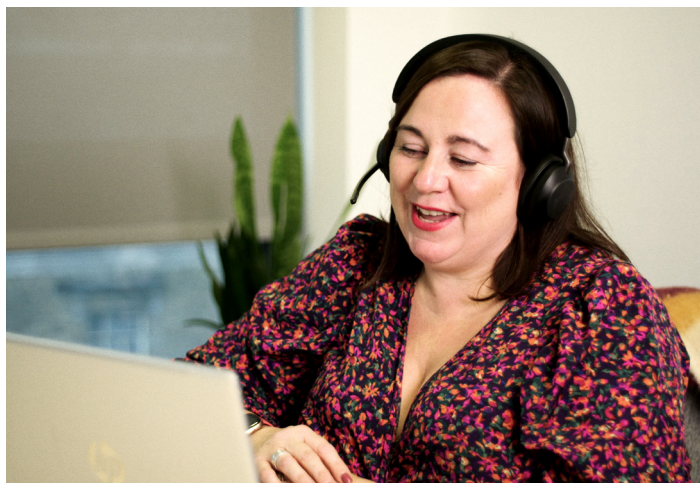
Your doctor or nurse can help with the side effects.

For example, they might give you medicine to stop you feeling sick.

They will give you a number to call if you feel unwell.



## Support from us



There are lots of ways we can help you. You can speak to our specialist nurses on our Support Line.

They can answer your questions and talk about your worries.

You can call them on **0808 801 0707**. Or you can email the nurses at: [nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)



We have lots more information about pancreatic cancer. You can read more on our website.

Go to: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/information](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/information)



We have videos about pancreatic cancer.

They can help you understand your treatment and care.

Go to: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/videos](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/videos)



We are here for you. If you or someone you care about has pancreatic cancer, we are here to help.

Find out all the ways we can support you. Go to: [pancreaticcancer.org.uk/support](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk/support)

This information has been produced by the Support and Information Team at Pancreatic Cancer UK and BTM, who specialise in accessible information.

We would like to thank BTM's work groups of people with learning disabilities and everyone else who has been involved in the development and testing of these booklets.

## **Pancreatic Cancer UK**

Queen Elizabeth House  
4 St Dunstan's Hill  
London EC3R 8AD

**020 3535 7090**

[enquiries@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)

[pancreaticcancer.org.uk](https://pancreaticcancer.org.uk)



©btm 2025

© Pancreatic Cancer UK July 2025

Review date July 2028

Registered charity number 1112708 (England and Wales), and SC046392 (Scotland)